

## **Soldiers**

He's old now, medals stretch across a chest  
button holes pull, still gleaming,  
A poppy, jingo red as every year,  
elbows a little worn, like his dreams.  
The pride is there, so are the memories,  
a mix of pain and pride.  
There will be a procession, a band,  
old soldiers knocking back pints,  
one for Bill, for Harry, one for all the others  
who lost life's game.  
Memories pushed to back of the brain.  
The scouts march with unknowing fervour  
He marches, shamed of love for his rifle.  
He loved it more than his wife,  
his bayonet, more than his mistress.  
Remembering his caress, across smooth curves,  
the slide of fingers, the precision of scope.  
The slick smell of oil, his acrid sweat.

*(C) Eileen Earnshaw*